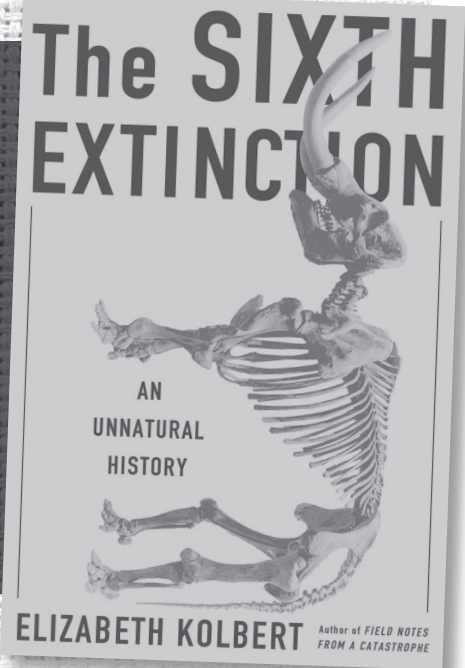


# Book Club in a Bag

## Discussion Questions

“What’s exceptional about Kolbert’s writing is the combination of scientific rigor and wry humor that keeps you turning the pages.”

- *National Geographic*



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**Elizabeth Kolbert** is a staff writer for The New Yorker and the author of *Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change*. Her series on global warming, *The Climate of Man*, from which the book was adapted, won the American Association for the Advancement of Science's magazine writing award and a National Academies communications award. She is a two-time National Magazine Award winner. She is also a recipient of a Heinz Award and Guggenheim Fellowship. Kolbert lives in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

## Book Summary

Over the last half-billion years, there have been Five mass extinctions, when the diversity of life on earth suddenly and dramatically contracted. Scientists around the world are currently monitoring the sixth extinction, predicted to be the most devastating extinction event since the asteroid impact that wiped out the dinosaurs. This time around, the cataclysm is us. In prose that is at once frank, entertaining, and deeply informed, New Yorker writer Elizabeth Kolbert tells us why and how human beings have altered life on the planet in a way no species has before. Interweaving research in half a dozen disciplines, descriptions of the fascinating species that have already been lost, and the history of extinction as a concept, Kolbert provides a moving and comprehensive account of the disappearances occurring before our very eyes. She shows that the sixth extinction is likely to be mankind's most lasting legacy, compelling us to rethink the fundamental question of what it means to be human.

## Discussion Questions

1. Has reading this book changed your views about climate change in any way?

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2. Did you find what you learned in this book alarming?

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3. What do you think about the example of the ammonite – they were perfectly adapted to their environment, but the catastrophic effects of the asteroid still resulted in their extinction.

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4. Do you see any way of slowing the acidification of the ocean? (pg118 tipping point is pH 7.8 – expected 2100)

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5. Do you think the “islands on dry land” method of studying small ecosystems can help us to predict the effect of our actions our larger ecosystem?

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6. In some parts of the world the number of species has dropped, in some parts of the world the number of species has increased. How does this add to the difficulty of predicting the future?

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7. What percentage Neanderthal are you?

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8. How far would you go to stop a species from becoming extinct?

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9. Do you think that Kolbert remains unbiased about the subject?

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10. Do you think you will change the way you live as a result of reading this book?

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